

STARK OBJECTS TO REPUBLICAN ENERGY BILL THAT DOES NOTHING TO LOWER GAS PRICES; HURTS ENVIRONMENT

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Today, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released specific state-by-state information on the Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs) and Medicare Advantage plans that will participate in the new Medicare Part D drug program.

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WASHINGTON

— Today, U.S. Representative Pete Stark (D-CA, 13th) gave the following statement in objection to H.R. 3893, the so-called Gasoline for America's Security Act of 2005. Stark's statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 3893, the so-called Gasoline for America's Security Act of 2005.

"This bill represents the worst of legislation written by and for corporations. In the name of helping the economy, it decimates environmental laws and eliminates the ability of state and local governments to decide what's best for them. It then reimburses oil companies for the inconvenience of having to act appropriately to protect our air and water. It is so far afield of economic reality that even the oil companies admit that refining capacity will increase without it. It is so environmentally reckless that one has to wonder if Republicans think that they, in addition to being exempt from our ethics rules, breathe different air than the rest of us.

"While the Majority says that environmental regulations are the reason for high gas prices, the facts just don't support their claim. The reason that the cost of refining has increased is because oil companies voluntarily closed 30 refineries in the late '80s and early '90s to increase their profit margins. The scheme worked: refinery revenues increased by 255% last year alone.

“As one would expect, high profits are now encouraging companies to once again build and expand refineries. 1.4 million barrels per day of refining capacity were added between 1996 and 2003. Due to this expansion, even the American Petroleum Institute acknowledges that the Republican’s bill is completely unnecessary.

“This bill is shamefully using hurricanes and high gas prices as an excuse to advance the extreme anti-environment agenda of the Republican Party’s corporate bankrollers. It would:

- Allow the President to place new refineries in national forests, wildlife refuges, and closed military bases. The military base in my district would probably be an appealing target for this President: it’s the site of a planned National Wildlife Refuge. Like many communities around the country, the City of Alameda has undergone an extensive planning process to convert the base to civilian use, but if the President said the word, all that could be undone without any local recourse.

- Give the federal government sole authority to place new refineries, even those not on federal land. Apparently the oil executives running the Bush Energy Department know better than your City Council where an oil refinery should be placed.

- Requires the federal government to reimburse refinery operators for the cost of lawsuits and any new environmental regulations. Citizens beware: if the Bush Administration wants to put a refinery next to your child’s preschool, you can sue to block it, but you’ll have to pay back the oil company every cent the lawsuit costs them.

“We could have raised fuel economy standards today -- the one policy that would actually have a dramatic impact on gas prices -- but the Majority blocked the House from even voting on the issue. Then again, it would hardly be germane to consider such an amendment on a bill that has nothing whatsoever to do with lowering gas prices. I vote no on this reckless bill.”